

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 QUITO 00860 01 OF 02 310129Z

71

ACTION ARA-10

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OMB-01 AF-06 IO-11 EUR-12 ACDA-05 NEA-10 SAM-01 AS-01

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R 301355Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8856

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 QUITO 0860

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR EC ECUADOREAN

SUBJECT: CURRENT PERCEPTION OF THE U.S.

REF: STATE 010605

THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS ARE KEYED TO THE QUESTIONS IN REFTTEL:

A. FOR MANY DECADES UNTIL THE MID-1960'S, THE MAJORITY OF ECUADOREANS VIEWED THE UNITED STATES AS A SAINT AMONG NATIONS, WHILE A SUBSTANTIAL MINORITY VIEWED THE U.S. AS A DEVIL, AND THE SMALL REMAINDER VIEWED THE U.S. AS SIMPLY A HUMAN ENTITY WITH HUMAN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES. THE EVENTS OF THE PAST TEN YEARS OR SO -- ESPECIALLY WATERGATE AND VIETNAM -- HAVE TENDED TO ALTER THE RATIOS AMONG THESE THREE GROUPS: THE MAJORITY NOW VIEWS THE U.S. AS A MIXED BAG OF PRAISEWORTHY AND DAMNABLE HUMAN ATTRIBUTES; A SUBSTANTIAL MINORITY ADHERES TO THE DEVIL VERSION; AND THE SMALL REMAINDER CLINGS TO THE SAINTLY IMAGE. BUT THE MAJORITY GROUP THAT HAS THE "MIXED-BAG" PERCEPTION TENDS ON THE WHOLE TO VIEW OUR STRENGTHS AND VIRTUES AS OUT-WEIGHING OUR WEAKNESSES AND VICES. THERE IS STILL A PRONOUNCED TENDENCY IN ECUADOR TO LOOK TO THE

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PAGE 02 QUITO 00860 01 OF 02 310129Z

UNITED STATES FOR LEADERSHIP OF THE NON-COMMUNIST CAMP.

THE UPPER SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASS STILL SENDS ITS CHILDREN TO THE UNITED STATES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (AND EVEN IN MANY CASES FOR SECONDARY-LEVEL EDUCATION), AND MANY IN THE GROWING MIDDLE CLASS DO SO AS WELL. THE COMMERCIAL SECTOR STILL LOOKS PRIMARILY TO THE UNITED STATES FOR ITS IMPORTS, AND AS A MARKET FOR ITS EXPORTS. DESPITE SOME GRUMBLINGS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN ECUADOR AGAINST "U.S. CULTURAL IMPERIALISM", VIRTUALLY ALL ECUADOREANS OF MEANS FLOCK TO SEE AMERICAN MOVIES, BUY AMERICAN MUSICAL RECORDS AND READ AMERICAN BOOKS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS IN TRANSLATION OR IN ENGLISH.

B. WHILE THE OUTCOME IN VIETNAM HAS CAUSED MANY ECUADOREANS TO SUSPECT THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD BE UNWILLING OR UNABLE TO CARRY OUT SOME OF ITS INTERNATIONAL MILITARY COMMITMENTS, HOWEVER DEFINED, MOST BELIEVE THAT THE UNITED STATES STILL CONSIDERS THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE TO BE VITALLY IMPORTANT TO THE UNITED STATES' MILITARY AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS, AND THAT ANY ACTION IN THIS HEMISPHERE THAT IS JOINTLY PERCEIVED BY THE CONGRESS AND EXECUTIVE BRANCH TO BE A DIRE THREAT TO THOSE U.S. INTERESTS WOULD BE VEHEMENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY COUNTERED BY THE U.S. WITH RESPECT TO THE RIO PACT, ECUADOREAN POLITICAL LEADERS UNDERSTAND THAT THE COMMITMENT IS PRIMARILY ONE OF CONSULTATION FOLLOWING AN ATTACK BY AN EXTERNAL POWER, AND THAT USG RESPONSE WOULD BE DETERMINED BY THE PREVAILING CIRCUMSTANCES.

C AND D. EDUCATED OPINION IN ECUADOR VIEWS THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE CONGRESS AS PREVENTING THE USG FROM LIVING UP TO MANY OF ITS COMMITMENTS. NOTE THAT WE SAY "USG" AND NOT THE "ADMINISTRATION." THE GOE UNDERSTANDS SUFFICIENTLY THE U.S. POLITICAL PROCESS AND THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE CONGRESS. BUT AS A PRACTICAL MATTER IT MUST DEAL WITH THE ADMINISTRATION AS IF IT WERE THE ENTIRE USG AND THEREFORE DISTINCTIONS BECOME VALUELESS TO THEM. THE ADMINISTRATION'S DISCLAIMERS WITH RESPECT TO LEGISLATION OBJECTIONABLE TO ECUADOR OR INABILITY TO PROMOTE POSITIVE LEGISLATION ARE NOT ALWAYS TAKEN AT FACE VALUE.

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PAGE 03 QUITO 00860 01 OF 02 310129Z

THEY ARE VIEWED NOT SO MUCH AS INSINCERE AS HALF-HEARTED. ECUADOR HAS LONG BEEN AFFECTED BY THE BLUNT EDGE OF SPECIFIC U.S. LEGISLATION, MOSTLY HAVING TO DO WITH SANCTIONS IMPOSED WHEN ECUADOR ENFORCES ITS 200 MILE TERRITORIAL SEA CLAIM -- A CLAIM WHICH WE ARE ABOUT TO LEGISLATE INTO LAW OURSELVES -- BUT MOST RECENTLY BECAUSE OF ITS EXCLUSION FROM GSP IN THE TRADE ACT. THE LATTER ISSUE HAS INDEED AFFECTED, BUT NOT DESTROYED, ECUADOR'S

READINESS TO COOPERATE WITH THE U.S., ESPECIALLY IN
MULTILATERAL FORUMS.

E. THE CHANGES IN TRADITIONAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE U.S.
HAVE BEEN OUTLINED IN A, ABOVE. THE BELIEF IS GROWING
THAT THE U.S. IS LESS THAN ALTRUISTIC IN ITS RELATIONS
WITH ECUADOR, AND THAT THE U.S. (IN PURSUING ITS OWN
GLOBAL AND DOMESTIC INTERESTS) IS CAPABLE OF INFLECTING
SEVERE HARM ON ECUADOR'S ECONOMIC INTEREST. THERE IS
ALSO THE POSSIBILITY THAT, AMONG CERTAIN SECTORS, THE U.S.
MORAL FIBRE IS REGARDED AS WEAKENED, BECAUSE OF THE GREAT
PUBLICITY GIVEN TO STUDENT DISORDERS, THE USE OF DRUGS,
FREER SEXUAL BEHAVIOR, AND A DECLINE IN THE FAMILY UNIT.
TAKEN TOGETHER WITH THE ALTERED STATUS OF RELATIONSHIPS
AMONG ALL COUNTRIES SINCE WORLD WAR II, THESE NEW CONDI-
TIONS AND ATTITUDES HAVE INDEED IMPACTED ON THE FOREIGN
POLICY OF ECUADOR AND ON ITS RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED
STATES. ECUADOR IS NO LONGER READY AUTOMATICALLY TO
CONFORM TO U.S. WISHES ON MULTILATERAL ISSUES UNLESS --
AS THEY STILL USUALLY DO -- THE INTERESTS OF BOTH COUNTRIES
HAVE CLEAR MUTUALITY.

F. CUBA'S INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA HAS HELPED TO SHATTER
THE ILLUSION, WHICH FORMERLY WAS BECOMING PREVALENT HERE,
THAT CUBA HAD ABANDONED ITS INTENT TO EXPORT REVOLUTION.
ALSO, CUBA NOW APPEARS TO MORE ECUADOREANS AS A "STOOGES"
OF THE SOVIET UNION, AND THE VIEW OF THE RUSSIANS AS
IMPERIALISTS IS STRENGTHENED. A MAJORITY OF INFORMED ECUADOREANS

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PAGE 01 QUITO 00860 02 OF 02 310131Z

71

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8857

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 QUITO 0860

PROBABLY VIEW ANGOLA AS A TEST OF THE ABILITY OF THE U.S. TO BLOCK FURTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY GAINS ON THE WORLD SCENE. IF THE CUBANS AND RUSSIANS ARE SUCCESSFUL IN ANGOLA, SOME AND PERHAPS MANY ECUADOREANS WILL BE CONVINCED OF THE VALIDITY OF THEIR CURRENT SUSPICION OR BELIEF THAT THE U.S. HAS BECOME A HELPLESS GIANT IN THE REGIONS ACROSS THE ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC. THEY WILL PROBABLY, HOWEVER, CONTINUE TO VIEW THE U.S. AS BEING NOT HELPLESS IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE.

G. THE GOE ATTACHES GREAT VALUE TO DIPLOMACY THROUGH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. ITS COMMITMENT IS MOTIVATED IN PART BECAUSE THE GOE COMPREHENDS ITS LIMITED CAPABILITY TO GAIN THE ATTENTION AND COOPERATION OF GREAT POWERS THROUGH BILATERAL RELATIONS ALONE. APPRECIATION OF DIPLOMACY THROUGH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IS PROBABLY REINFORCED BY THE APPARENTLY INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE LARGER LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, AND CONSEQUENT FEARS BY ECUADOREANS THAT WITHOUT INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS THE SMALLER NATIONS WOULD BE EVEN MORE NEGLECTED. OPEC, ALTHOUGH NOT NECESSARILY ECUADOR'S MEMBERSHIP IN IT, HAS BEEN OF KEY IMPORTANCE TO
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PAGE 02 QUITO 00860 02 OF 02 310131Z

ECUADOR. ECUADOR IS AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE GROUP OF 77, BUT MAINTAINS ONLY AN OBSERVER STATUS AMONG THE NON-ALIGNED. IT IS TOO EARLY TO JUDGE SELA. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING THE OAS, ARE THUS CONSIDERED AS IMPORTANT SUPPLEMENTS TO BILATERAL TIES WITH THE USG, WHICH ARE STILL CONSIDERED AS IMPORTANT AND BASIC TO RESOLUTION OF SPECIFIC ISSUES.

H. THE GOE'S VOTING POSITION IN THE UN AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL FORUMS (APART FROM ISSUES NOT DIRECTLY RELATING TO U.S.-ECUADOREAN RELATIONS), HAS BEEN CHANGING, NOT SO MUCH OUT OF THE CHANGE IN PERCEPTIONS OF THE U.S., AS OUT OF DEVELOPMENTS AND SHIFTS IN THE POWER AND WEALTH OF THE REST OF THE WORLD. FOR EXAMPLE, WHILE TAKING MORE CARE NOT TO OFFEND THE ARAB COUNTRIES, ECUADOR CONTINUES TO ENJOY CLOSE COMMERCIAL TIES WITH ISRAEL, ALTHOUGH THE ISRAELI AMBASSADOR TO ECUADOR FEELS THAT THESE TIES ARE ERODING FOR POLITICAL REASONS.

I. WHILE THE GOE IS NOW LOOKING MORE TO THE ARAB BLOC

AND TO THE WEALTHIER COUNTRIES OF THE THIRD WORLD FOR ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SUPPORT, IT IS DOING SO TO AUGMENT RATHER THAN REPLACE THE SUPPORT OF THE U.S. ALTHOUGH THE GOE DOES SEEK "UNIVERSALITY" OF TRADE AND OTHER RELATIONS, IT SHOWS NO SIGNS OF TRYING OR EVEN WISHING TO DEIVERSITY AWAY FROM ITS ECONOMIC/COMMERCIAL TIES WITH THE U.S.; AND, EVEN APART FROM THIS ATTITUDE, ECUADOR'S GEOGRAPHIC POSITION STRONGLY COMPELS IT TO WANT TO CONTINUE UNINTERRUPTED ITS OIL EXPORTS TO THE U.S.

J. THE GOE VIEWS THE U.S. AS BEING INSENSITIVE TO MANY OF THE NEEDS AND CONCERNS OF THE DEVELOPING NATIONS -- AND AS BEING UNABLE TO BE APPRECIABLY HELPFUL AS REGARDS SOME OF THE NEEDS AND CONCERNS TO WHICH THE U.S. IS SENSITIVE.
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